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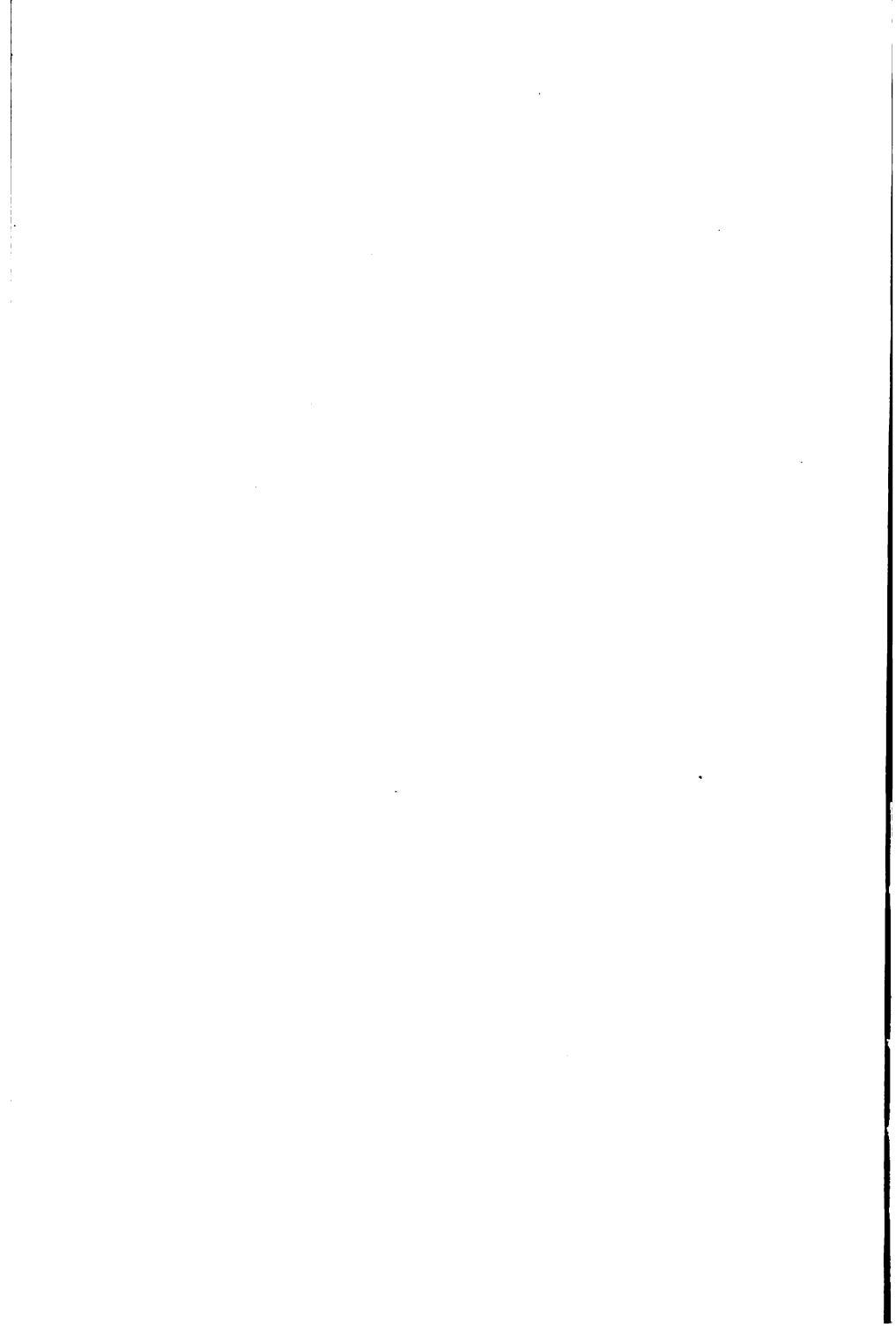




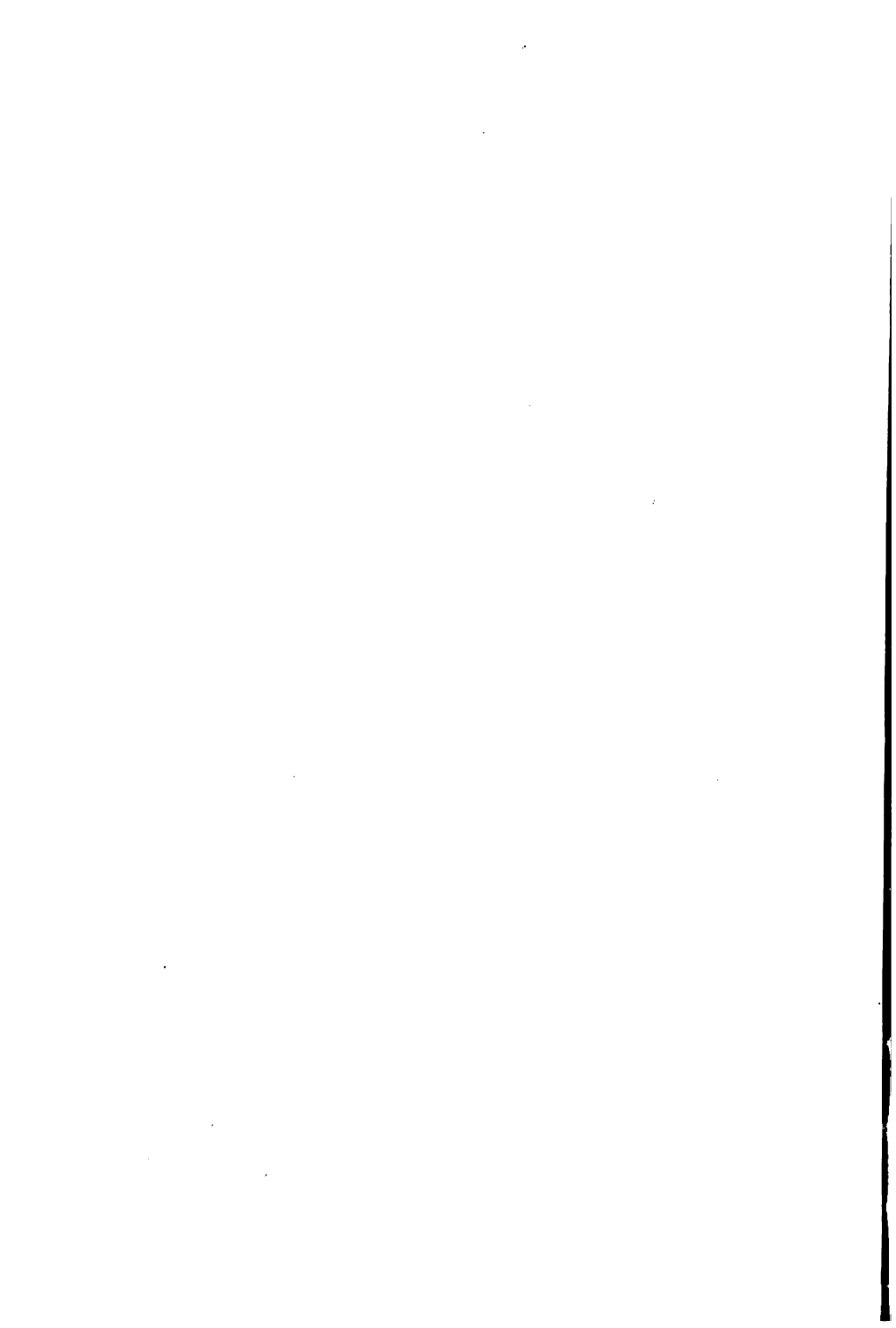
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## **HYMNS OF THE MARSHES**



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# HYMNS OF THE MARSHES

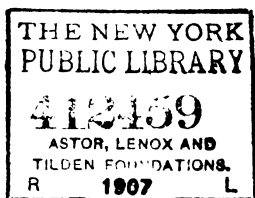
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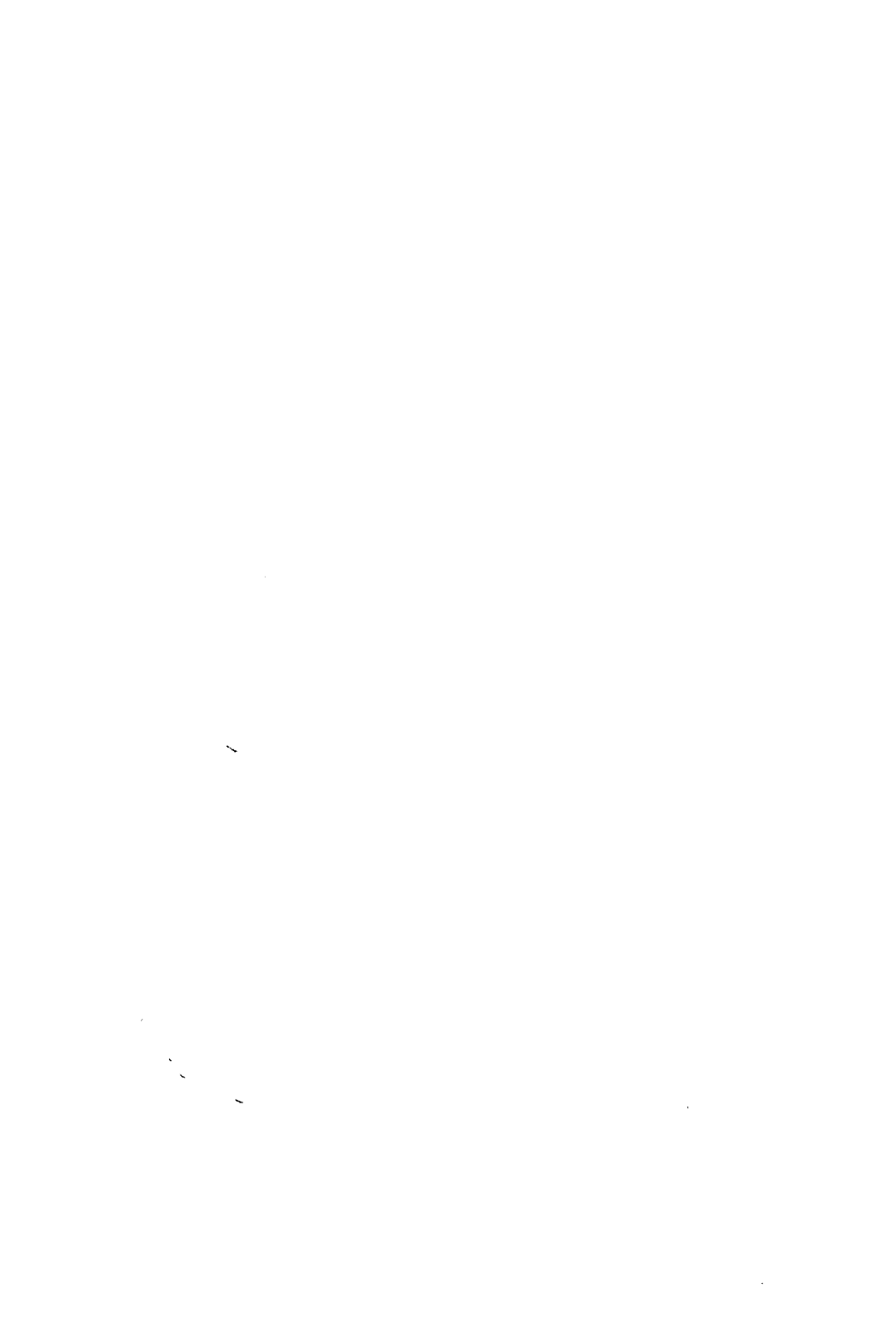
*From photographs taken near Brunswick, Georgia, where the poet  
derived his inspiration for the Hymns of the Marshes*

Look how the grace of the sea doth go About and about through the intricate channels that flow Here and there, Everywhere,	<i>Frontispiece</i>
In my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain Of the live-oak, the marsh, and the main.	FACING PAGE 4
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## **HYMNS OF THE MARSHES**





## I

### SUNRISE

IN my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain  
Of the live-oak, the marsh, and the main.  
The little green leaves would not let me alone in my  
sleep;  
Up-breathed from the marshes, a message of range and  
of sweep,  
Interwoven with waftures of wild sea-liberties, drifting,  
Came through the lapped leaves sifting, sifting,  
Came to the gates of sleep.

*In my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain  
Of the live-oak, the marsh, and the main.*





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## SUNRISE

---

Then my thoughts, in the dark of the dungeon-keep  
Of the Castle of Captives hid in the City of Sleep,  
Upstarted, by twos and by threes assembling:

The gates of sleep fell a-trembling  
Like as the lips of a lady that forth falter yes,  
Shaken with happiness:  
The gates of sleep stood wide.

I have waked, I have come, my beloved! I might not  
abide:

I have come ere the dawn, O beloved, my live-oaks, to  
hide

In your gospelling glooms,—to be  
As a lover in heaven, the marsh my marsh and the sea  
my sea.

Tell me, sweet burly-bark'd, man-bodied Tree  
That mine arms in the dark are embracing, dost know  
From what fount are these tears at thy feet which flow?



## SUNRISE

---

They rise not from reason, but deeper inconsequent  
deeps.

Reason 's not one that weeps.

What logic of greeting lies

Betwixt dear over-beautiful trees and the rain of the  
eyes?

O cunning green leaves, little masters! like as ye gloss  
All the dull-tissued dark with your luminous darks that  
emboss

The vague blackness of night into pattern and plan,

So,

(But would I could know, but would I could know,)

With your question embroid'ring the dark of the ques-  
tion of man,—

So, with your silences purfling this silence of man

While his cry to the dead for some knowledge is under  
the ban,

Under the ban,—



## SUNRISE

---

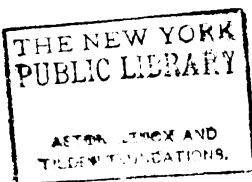
So, ye have wrought me  
Designs on the night of our knowledge,—yea, ye have  
taught me,  
So,  
That haply we know somewhat more than we know.

Ye lispers, whisperers, singers in storms,  
Ye consciences murmuring faiths under forms,  
Ye ministers meet for each passion that grieves,  
Friendly, sisterly, sweetheart leaves,  
Oh, rain me down from your darks that contain me  
Wisdoms ye winnow from winds that pain me,—  
Sift down tremors of sweet-within-sweet  
That advise me of more than they bring,—repeat  
Me the woods-smell that swiftly but now brought breath  
From the heaven-side bank of the river of death,—  
Teach me the terms of silence,—preach me  
The passion of patience,—sift me,—impeach me,—  
And there, oh there

*My gossip, the owl,—is it thou  
That out of the leaves of the low-hanging bough,  
As I pass to the beach, art stirred?  
Dumb woods, have ye uttered a bird?*







## SUNRISE

---

As ye hang with your myriad palms upturned in the air,  
Pray me a myriad prayer.

My gossip, the owl,—is it thou  
That out of the leaves of the low-hanging bough,  
As I pass to the beach, art stirred?  
Dumb woods, have ye uttered a bird?

\* \* \* \* \*

Reverend Marsh, low-couched along the sea,  
Old chemist, rapt in alchemy,  
Distilling silence,—lo,  
That which our father-age had died to know—  
The menstruum that dissolves all matter—thou  
Hast found it; for this silence, filling now  
The globèd clarity of receiving space,  
This solves us all: man, matter, doubt, disgrace,  
Death, love, sin, sanity,  
Must in yon silence' clear solution lie.  
Too clear! That crystal nothing who 'll peruse?



## SUNRISE

---

The blackest night could bring us brighter news.  
Yet precious qualities of silence haunt  
Round these vast margins, ministrant.  
Oh. if thy soul 's at latter gasp for space,  
With trying to breathe no bigger than thy race  
Just to be fellow'd, when that thou hast found  
No man with room, or grace enough of bound  
To entertain that New thou tell'st, thou art,—  
'T is here, 't is here thou canst unhand thy heart  
And breathe it free, and breathe it free,  
By rangy marsh, in lone sea-liberty.

The tide 's at full: the marsh with flooded streams  
Glimmers, a limpid labyrinth of dreams.  
Each winding creek in grave entrancement lies  
A rhapsody of morning-stars. The skies  
Shine scant with one forked galaxy,—  
The marsh brags ten: looped on his breast they lie.

*And look where the wild duck sails round the bend of  
the river,—*



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## SUNRISE

---

Oh, what if a sound should be made!

Oh, what if a bound should be laid

To this bow-and-string tension of beauty and silence  
a-spring,—

To the bend of beauty the bow, or the hold of silence the  
string!

I fear me, I fear me yon dome of diaphanous gleam

Will break as a bubble o'er-blown in a dream,—

Yon dome of too-tenuous tissues of space and of night,

Over-weighted with stars, over-freighted with light,

Over-sated with beauty and silence, will seem

But a bubble that broke in a dream,

If a bound of degree to this grace be laid,

Or a sound or a motion made.

But no: it is made: list! somewhere,—mystery, where?

In the leaves? in the air?

In my heart? is a motion made;

'T is a motion of dawn, like a flicker of shade on shade.





## SUNRISE

---

In the leaves, 't is palpable: low multitudinous stirring  
Upwinds through the woods; the little ones, softly  
    conferring,

Have settled my lord's to be looked for; so; they  
    are still;

But the air and my heart and the earth are a-thrill,—  
And look where the wild duck sails round the bend of  
    the river,—

And look where a passionate shiver  
    Expectant is bending the blades  
Of the marsh-grass in serial shimmers and shades,—  
And invisible wings, fast fleeting, fast fleeting,

    Are beating  
The dark overhead as my heart beats,—and steady and  
    free

Is the ebb-tide flowing from marsh to sea—  
    (Run home, little streams,  
    With your lapfuls of stars and dreams),—  
And a sailor unseen is hoisting a-peak,



## SUNRISE

---

For list, down the inshore curve of the creek  
How merrily flutters the sail,—  
And lo, in the East! Will the East unveil?  
The East is unveiled, the East hath confessed  
A flush; 't is dead; 't is alive; 't is dead, ere the West  
Was aware of it; nay, 't is abiding, 't is unwithdrawn:  
Have a care, sweet Heaven! 'T is Dawn.

Now a dream of a flame through that dream of a flush  
is uprolled;

To the zenith ascending, a dome of undazzling gold  
Is builded, in shape as a bee-hive, from out of the sea;  
The hive is of gold undazzling, but oh, the Bee,  
The star-fed Bee, the build-fire Bee,  
Of dazzling gold is the great Sun-Bee  
That shall flash from the hive-hole over the sea.

Yet now the dew-drop, now the morning gray,  
Shall live their little lucid sober day

*And look where a passionate shiver  
Expectant is bending the blades  
Of the marsh-grass in serial shimmers and shades,—*



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## SUNRISE

---

Ere with the sun their souls exhale away.  
Now in each pettiest personal sphere of dew  
The summ'd morn shines complete as in the blue  
Big dew-drop of all heaven; with these lit shrines  
O'er-silvered to the farthest sea-confines,  
The sacramental marsh one pious plain  
Of worship lies. Peace to the ante-reign  
Of Mary Morning, blissful mother mild,  
Minded of nought but peace, and of a child.  
Not slower than Majesty moves, for a mean and a  
    measure  
Of motion,—not faster than dateless Olympian leisure  
Might pace with unblown ample garments from pleas-  
    ure to pleasure,—  
The wave-serrate sea-rim sinks unjarring, unreeling,  
    Forever revealing, revealing, revealing,  
Edgewise, bladewise, halfwise, wholewise,—'t is done!  
    Good-morrow, lord Sun!  
With several voice, with ascription one,



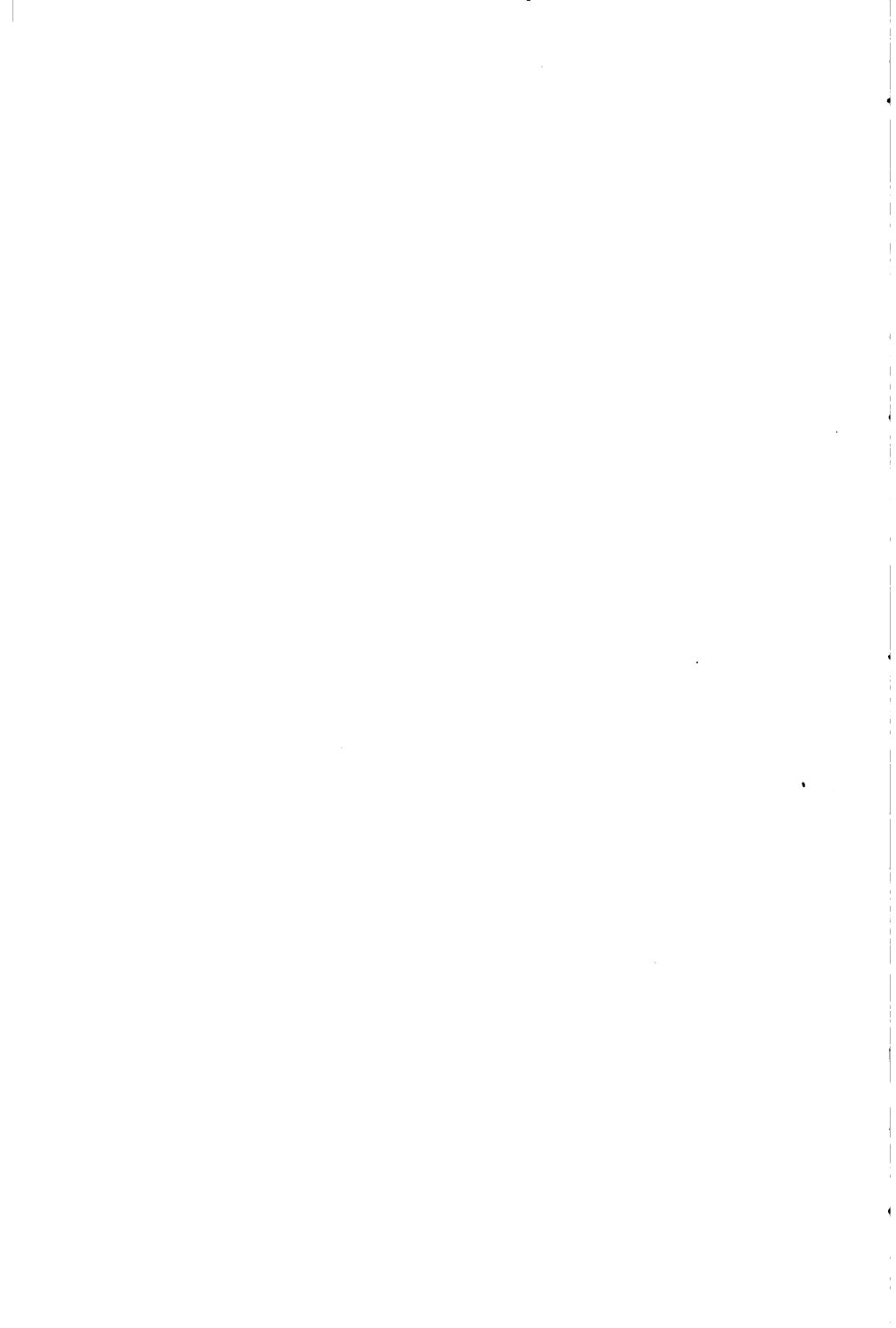


## SUNRISE

---

The woods and the marsh and the sea and my soul  
Unto thee, whence the glittering stream of all morrows  
doth roll,  
Cry good and past-good and most heavenly morrow,  
lord Sun.

O Artisan born in the purple,—Workman Heat,—  
Parter of passionate atoms that travail to meet  
And be mixed in the death-cold oneness,—innermost  
Guest  
At the marriage of elements,—fellow of publicans,—  
blest  
King in the blouse of flame, that loiterest o'er  
The idle skies yet laborest fast evermore,—  
Thou, in the fine forge-thunder, thou, in the beat  
Of the heart of a man, thou Motive,—Laborer Heat:  
Yea, Artist, thou, of whose art yon sea 's all news,  
With his inshore greens and manifold mid-sea blues,  
Pearl-glint, shell-tint, ancientest perfectest hues



## SUNRISE

---

Ever shaming the maidens,—lily and rose  
Confess thee, and each mild flame that glows  
In the clarified virginal bosoms of stones that shine,  
It is thine, it is thine:

Thou chemist of storms, whether driving the winds  
a-swirl

Or a-flicker the subtiler essences polar that whirl  
In the magnet earth,—yea, thou with a storm for a heart,  
Rent with debate, many-spotted with question, part  
From part oft sundered, yet ever a globèd light,  
Yet ever the artist, ever more large and bright  
Than the eye of a man may avail of:—manifold One,  
I must pass from thy face, I must pass from the face of  
the Sun;

Old Want is awake and agog, every wrinkle a-frown;  
The worker must pass to his work in the terrible town;  
But I fear not, nay, and I fear not the thing to be done;  
I am strong with the strength of my lord the Sun;



## SUNRISE

---

How dark, how dark soever the race that must needs be  
run,

I am lit with the sun.

Oh, never the mast-high run of the seas

Of traffic shall hide thee,

Never the hell-colored smoke of the factories

Hide thee,

Never the reek of the time's fen-politics

Hide thee,

And ever my heart through the night shall with know-  
ledge abide thee,

And ever by day shall my spirit, as one that hath tried  
thee,

Labor, at leisure, in art,—till yonder beside thee

My soul shall float, friend Sun,

The day being done.

BALTIMORE, December, 1880.





## II

### INDIVIDUALITY

SAIL on, sail on, fair cousin Cloud:

Oh loiter hither from the sea.

Still-eyed and shadow-brow'd,

Steal off from yon far-drifting crowd,

And come and brood upon the marsh with me.

Yon laboring low horizon-smoke,

Yon stringent sail, toil not for thee

Nor me; did heaven's stroke





## INDIVIDUALITY

---

The whole deep with drown'd commerce choke,  
No pitiless tease of risk or bottomry

Would to thy rainy office close  
Thy will, or lock mine eyes from tears,  
    Part wept for traders'-woes,  
Part for that ventures mean as those  
In issue bind such sovereign hopes and fears.

—Lo, Cloud, thy downward countenance stares  
Blank on the blank-faced marsh, and thou  
    Mindest of dark affairs;  
Thy substance seems a warp of cares;  
Like late wounds run the wrinkles on thy brow.

Well may'st thou pause, and gloom, and stare,  
A visible conscience: I arraign  
    Thee, criminal Cloud, of rare  
Contempts on Mercy, Right, and Prayer,—  
Of murders, arsons, thefts,—of nameless stain

*Sail on, sail on, fair cousin Cloud:  
Oh loiter hither from the sea.*



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## INDIVIDUALITY

---

(Yet though life's logic grow as gray  
As thou, my soul 's not in eclipse.)

Cold Cloud, but yesterday  
Thy lightning slew a child at play,  
And then a priest with prayers upon his lips

For his enemies, and then a bright  
Lady that did but ope the door  
Upon the storming night  
To let a beggar in,—strange spite,—  
And then thy sulky rain refused to pour

Till thy quick torch a barn had burned  
Where twelve months' store of victual lay,  
A widow's sons had earned;  
Which done, thy floods with winds returned,—  
The river raped their little herd away.

What myriad righteous errands high  
Thy flames *might* run on! In that hour



## INDIVIDUALITY

---

Thou slewest the child, oh why  
Not rather slay Calamity,  
Breeder of Pain and Doubt, infernal Power?

Or why not plunge thy blades about  
Some maggot politician throng  
    Swarming to parcel out  
The body of a land, and rout  
The maw-conventicle, and ungorge Wrong?

*What the cloud doeth  
The Lord knoweth,  
The cloud knoweth not.  
What the artist doeth,  
The Lord knoweth;  
Knoweth the artist not?*

Well-answered!—O dear artists, ye  
—Whether in forms of curve or hue





## INDIVIDUALITY

---

Or tone your gospels be—  
Say wrong *This work is not of me,*  
*But God:* it is not true, it is not true.

Awful is Art because 't is free.  
The artist trembles o'er his plan  
Where men his Self must see.  
Who made a song or picture, he  
Did it, and not another, God nor man.

My Lord is large, my Lord is strong:  
Giving, He gave: my me is mine.  
How poor, how strange, how wrong,  
To dream He wrote the little song  
I made to Him with love's unforced design!

Oh, not as clouds dim laws have plann'd  
To strike down Good and fight for Ill,—  
Oh, not as harps that stand  
In the wind and sound the wind's command:  
Each artist—gift of terror!—owns his will.



## INDIVIDUALITY

---

For thee, Cloud,—if thou spend thine all  
Upon the South's o'er-brimming sea  
That needs thee not; or crawl  
To the dry provinces, and fall  
Till every convert clod shall give to thee

Green worship; if thou grow or fade,  
Bring on delight or misery,  
Fly east or west, be made  
Snow, hail, rain, wind, grass, rose, light, shade;  
What matters it to thee? There is no thee.

Pass, kinsman Cloud, now fair and mild:  
Discharge the will that 's not thine own.  
I work in freedom wild,  
But work, as plays a little child,  
Sure of the Father, Self, and Love, alone.

BALTIMORE, 1878-9,





### III

#### MARSH SONG—AT SUNSET

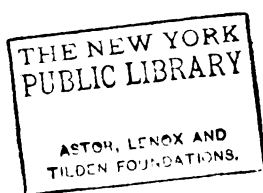
OVER the monstrous shambling sea,  
Over the Caliban sea,  
Bright Ariel-cloud, thou lingerest;  
Oh wait, oh wait, in the warm red West,—  
Thy Prospero I 'll be.

Over the humped and fishy sea,  
Over the Caliban sea  
O cloud in the West, like a thought in the heart

***Over the monstrous shambling sea,***







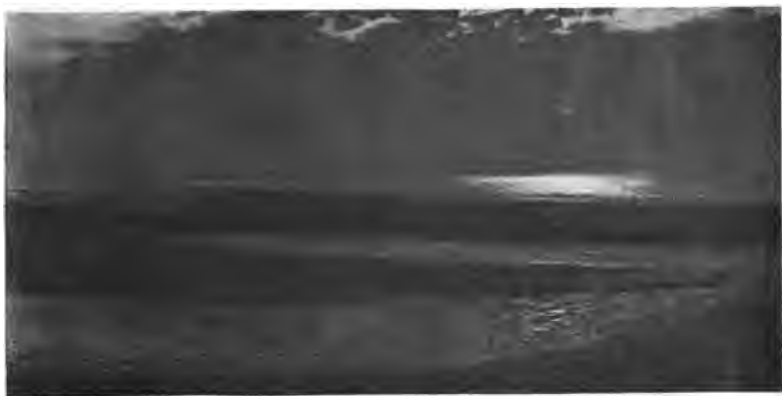
## MARSH SONG—AT SUNSET

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Of pardon, loose thy wing, and start,  
And do a grace for me.

Over the huge and huddling sea,  
Over the Caliban sea,  
Bring hither my brother Antonio,—Man,—  
My injurer; night breaks the ban:  
Brother, I pardon thee.

BALTIMORE, 1879-80,







#### IV

### THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

GLOOMS of the live-oaks, beautiful-braided and woven  
With intricate shades of the vines that myriad-cloven  
    Clamber the forks of the multi-form boughs,—  
        Emerald twilights,—  
        Virginal shy lights,  
Wrought of the leaves to allure to the whisper of vows,  
When lovers pace timidly down through the green  
    colonnades  
Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,  
    Of the heavenly woods and glades,

*Glooms of the live-oaks, beautiful-braided and woven  
With intricate shades of the vines that myriad-cloven  
Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs,—*



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## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

---

That run to the radiant marginal sand-beach within  
The wide sea-marshes of Glynn;—

Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the noon-day fire,—  
Wildwood privacies, closets of lone desire,  
Chamber from chamber parted with wavering arras of  
leaves,—

Cells for the passionate pleasure of prayer to the soul  
that grieves,

Pure with a sense of the passing of saints through the  
wood,

Cool for the dutiful weighing of ill with good;—

O braided dusks of the oak and woven shades of the  
vine

While the riotous noon-day sun of the June-day long  
did shine

Ye held me fast in your heart and I held you fast in  
mine;



*Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,  
Of the heavenly woods and glades,*



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## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

---

But now when the noon is no more, and riot is rest,  
And the sun is a-wait at the ponderous gate of the West,  
And the slant yellow beam down the wood-aisle doth  
seem

Like a lane into heaven that leads from a dream,—  
Ay, now, when my soul all day hath drunken the soul  
of the oak,

And my heart is at ease from men, and the wearisome  
sound of the stroke

Of the scythe of time and the trowel of trade is low,  
And belief overmasters doubt, and I know that I  
know,

And my spirit is grown to a lordly great compass  
within,

That the length and the breadth and the sweep of the  
marshes of Glynn

Will work me no fear like the fear they have wrought  
me of yore

When length was fatigue, and when breadth was but  
bitterness sore,

*Affable live-oak, leaning low,—*



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## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

---

And when terror and shrinking and dreary unnamable  
pain

Drew over me out of the merciless miles of the plain,—

Oh, now, unafraid, I am fain to face

The vast sweet visage of space.

To the edge of the wood I am drawn, I am drawn,

Where the gray beach glimmering runs, as a belt of  
the dawn,

For a mete and a mark

To the forest-dark:—

So:

Affable live-oak, leaning low,—

Thus—with your favor—soft, with a reverent hand,  
(Not lightly touching your person, Lord of the land!)

Bending your beauty aside, with a step I stand

On the firm-packed sand,

Free

By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea.



*Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the  
shimmering band  
Of the sand-beach fastens the fringe of the marsh  
to the folds of the land.*



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## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

---

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,  
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God;  
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies  
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh  
and the skies;

By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod  
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God;  
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within  
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.

And the sea lends large, as the marsh; lo, out of his  
plenty the sea  
Pours fast: full soon the time of the flood-tide must be;  
Look how the grace of the sea doth go  
About and about through the intricate channels that flow  
Here and there,  
Everywhere,  
Till his waters have flooded the uttermost creeks and the  
low-lying lanes,



## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

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And the marsh is meshed with a million veins,  
That like as with rosy and silvery essences flow  
In the rose-and-silver evening glow.

Farewell, my lord Sun!  
The creeks overflow: a thousand rivulets run  
'Twixt the roots of the sod; the blades of the marsh-  
grass stir;  
Passeth a hurrying sound of wings that westward  
whirr;  
Passeth, and all is still; and the currents cease to run;  
And the sea and the marsh are one.

How still the plains of the waters be!  
The tide is in his ecstasy.  
The tide is at his highest height:  
And it is night.

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the waters of  
sleep  
Roll in on the souls of men,



## THE MARSHES OF GLYNN

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But who will reveal to our waking ken  
The forms that swim and the shapes that creep  
    Under the waters of sleep?  
And I would I could know what swimmeth below when  
    the tide comes in  
On the length and the breadth of the marvellous  
    marshes of Glynn.

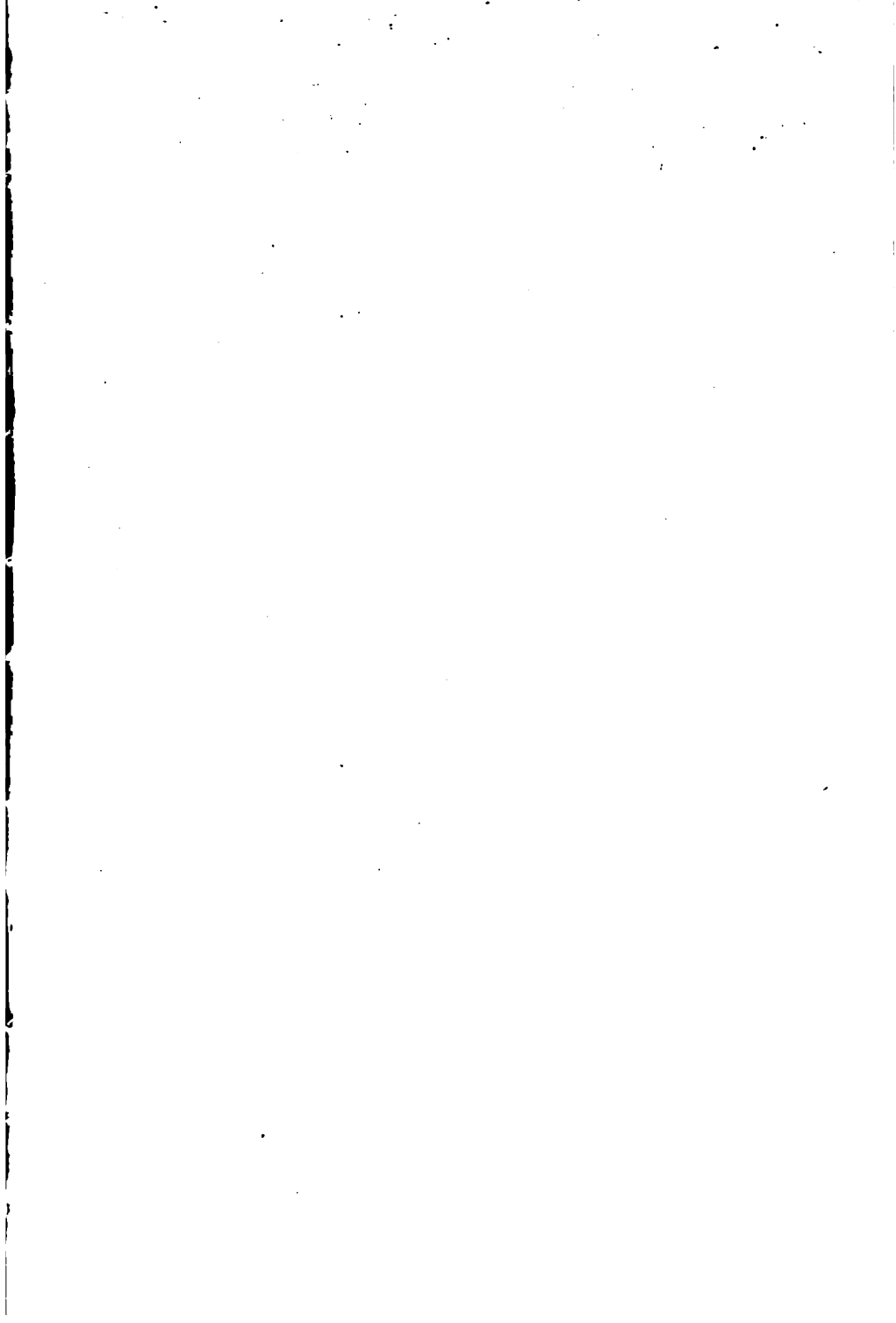
BALTIMORE, 1878.



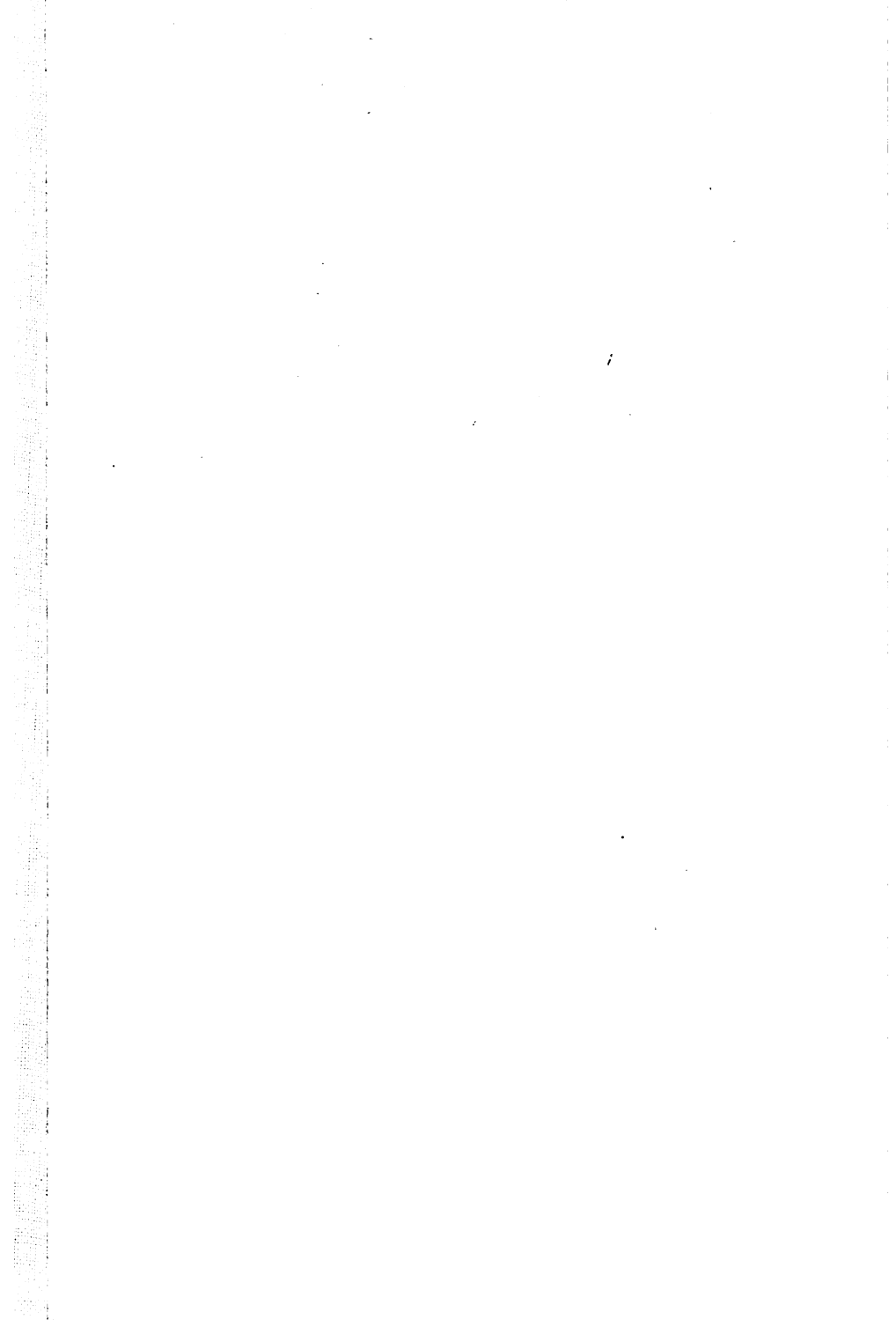


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